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A LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

E. S. P. HAYNES.

UP to 1919 most observations on this subject lacked just the element of actuality that wins human assent. Men read President Wilson's speeches in much the same mood as they read Plato's Republic or any other Utopia, or as they used to read of flying experiments before the aeroplane materialized. Their attitude remained passive even when quite an admirable groundwork for a league was presented to them by a consummate lawyer like Lord Parker in the House of Lords on the 19th March, 1918, although the date and occasion of his speech were unexpectedly inauspicious. But the end of the war cleared the air of ancient assumptions. The alleged uses of war as a social purge, its alleged necessity as an outlet of human passions, its alleged permanence (on the analogy of prostitution and disease) became no longer plausible. The devastating misery of war now challenges human ingenuity to mend or end it just as human ingenuity is always wrestling, not altogether vainly, with the problems of prostitution and disease. Moreover, human ingenuity has admittedly succeeded in establishing a reasonable measure of free discussion which would have been considered entirely utopian in the sixteenth century.

It is realized, for instance, that social purgation can be achieved by revolutions which are all the more bloodless because they can only be justified by the complete success of an overwhelming force behind them. We see that men can learn to abstain from duelling, that they have at best but little to gain from war, and that pugnacious and adventurous instincts can be and are canalized into modern exploration and finance. We see that patriotism is by no means necessarily a product of militarism; but that militarism is rather a by-product of patriotism. A flag stirs emotion; so do the colours of an Oxford or Cambridge col-

lege. Yet it does not occur to the bitterest critic of Balliol to suggest that the members of that college would ever wish to vindicate its prestige by exerting armed force against the University of Oxford or any of the other colleges. Moreover in the mediaeval, possibly also in the modern, world many citizens of different European countries habitually regarded Europe much as a Balliol man regards his University.

We may bear in mind that the judicial committee of the Privy Council settles in London the disputes of an Empire which comprises far more divergent and seemingly incompatible types of humanity than are to be found in the continent of Europe; and the British Empire has survived every intrigue that the Germans could engineer in its most remote quarters. There is undoubtedly some power apart from brute force that welds the whole mass together by a process apparently unfamiliar to German statecraft and philosophy. What is it?

Before we answer this question we are faced with the difficulty of explaining how the existence of any empire can ever be incompatible with a League of Nations. The *pax Romana*, may be said to have subjugated Europe, and the *pax Britannica* to have subjugated much of the world outside Europe; but what free play was left for small states under either yoke or how can any such empire combine with smaller states? The answer is that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The Roman Empire gained for Europe at least three centuries of human happiness. When the empire ceased to function it died; but the causes of its decline were accidental, and not necessarily inherent in its nature. Similarly, the British Empire, founded on sea power, has achieved incalculable good and honourably settled far more disputes by peaceful means in the last century than any other Power.

Under British, as under Roman, hegemony the citizens of small States all over the world, have enjoyed the privileges and happiness of real self-determination. If this is not so, why has Indian loyalty never failed Great Britain

in almost the worst crisis of her history during the last four years? Outside Europe, and outside the empire itself, the resources of Great Britain have always been united with those of the United States and of Japan in order to promote the peace and order of the world. In the famous lines of Virgil which begin, "Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento," the reader too often slurs over the words of the second line, "Hae tibi erunt artes; *pacisque imponere morem.*" For it is not war, but the prevention of war, that has justified the existence of Empires. It is today the potentialities of the British Empire for peace, external and internal, that principally justify its existence. It was the violation of the world's peace that united almost the whole world against the Central Empires.

We are now perhaps a little further on the way to finding the answer to our question: "What power holds together the British Empire or any other empire or any League of Nations?" We need not rely on arguments that can be called utopian; we need not assert that peace and goodwill are normal to human beings. We need expect no more of human nature than Hobbes did or the modern Prussian does. We need only presume that all human combinations to promote peace and order are founded on an universal fear of war and anarchy.

It is true that before 1914 this fear expressed itself in piling up armaments, but that was clearly because there was no other solution open to the European Powers. Germany was avowedly preparing for a war of conquest and there was no precedent in international law or custom for any other power or combination of powers uniting to treat this preparation as a *casus belli*. Nothing could be done according to existing rules but to await the cataclysm and hope that it might in some way be averted. Here again the motive of fear was paramount.

Inside Germany there was a strong peace party eloquently described by M. Cambon in 1913. The country was prospering commercially beyond all expectation. Trade and markets were being peacefully captured without

resistance all over the world. Why could the Germans not keep the peace? The answer is still the same. Their rulers perpetually frightened them with different bogeys; of which Russia was the most conspicuous. It suited the governing group, for various reasons, to make war and they had exploited the motive of fear from 1890 onwards to this end. Nothing but overpowering fear secured the toleration of secret diplomacy and autocratic intrigues that made the war possible. There was no doubt a looting instinct both in the governors and the governed; but it had not a fraction of the compelling force that the terror of imminent destruction could evoke.

Nearly four years have elapsed since then and the horizon is entirely changed. Europe is ravaged with war and anarchy. Its bogeys are the Prussian and the Bolshevik. Let us imagine, if we can, some sort of peace and order restored to Europe, even a peace and order in which Germany and her allies do not actively participate. What will men then fear? Surely they will fear nothing so vividly as the return of war. War will be to them something like the pneumonic plague, which when it spread westward to the famished populations of Central Europe might conceivably have ended the war. Can the rulers of Germany now threaten any process of destruction to their subjects which will have more terrors than those associated with war? Will not men of every country insist on governments which will relax no energy in establishing whatever security can be obtained against war? Surely it is clear that the general sense of mankind will overwhelmingly support any measures that can be adopted to preserve the human race from the menace of inevitable suicide.

We are told that the League of Nations is a "*chimera bombinans in vacuo*." But surely it has existed before our eyes since 1914. The principal powers of the civilized world are straining every nerve to end a process of universal destruction which was but feebly outlined by writers like Norman Angell. If men did not in 1914 recognise that war "did not pay," seventy-five per cent of the civil-

ized world must now be aware that the toleration of irresponsible dynasts and governors involves the destruction of all that makes life worth living.

It is just this question of responsibility in government that is crucial. Is it really possible, in the huge amorphous character of the modern state, to make either governing groups or individuals responsible for negligence or criminality? The old English remedy of impeachment is difficult to work as society becomes more and more complex. How far, for example, could it be proved that the Kaiser was morally responsible for the crimes of 1914 in the sense of being the driving personality, and not merely a reluctant figure head? On the other hand his legal responsibility is clear enough; and it may be safely predicted that modern peoples will be less tolerant than they ever were of any governing group that gambles on war in order to promote its own interests; or, as in the case of the Prussian junker, to crush the progress of political opponents. It is incredible that the abominable intrigues of despotism and secret diplomacy, described in such books as Bismarck's "Reminiscences" or Dr. Dillon's "Eclipse of Russia," will be allowed to endanger the happiness, and even the existence of, the human race.

The responsibility of the world's rulers can, however, be enforced from the outside if once a League of Nations is established. No nation will welcome the minor penalties of a blockade or commercial boycott more than the English welcomed the interdict in the reign of King John. If the league can substitute temporal for spiritual weapons in dealing with lawless violence no despot can ignore the league, however callous he may be to the welfare of his own subjects.

Without such a league the world has to face not only self destruction on a colossal scale but also complete anarchy. Men will not work for, and women will not bear children into, a world which is at the mercy of irresponsible tyrants. Almost a majority of human beings now alive have personally suffered from the war either in mutilation

or bereavement, or the destruction of their homes or in privation of some kind. There is no more glamour about war as an art in itself. The Germans may have won considerable prestige as fighters; but they are today regarded by civilized men more as noxious ruffians than as human beings.

The whole *morale* of the Allies today reposes on their collective resolution to stamp out murder and violence. Most of their soldiers would have revolted long ago but for their belief in the possibility of a new order of peace and justice. This point of view has been reiterated in our own war propaganda and it is far more emphatically expressed today than in any previous wars.

To some minds history may suggest the constant supremacy of war-loving races such as the Prussians or the inhabitants of the Balkans. The decline of the Roman Empire is an obvious example. The answer is that modern conditions are quite different. War has become too complicated in its machinery and resources to be controlled by a horde of scientific barbarians. As Mr. Wells has pointed out, modern warfare is the monopoly of the modern industrial state; and the control of raw materials by the power of a blockade may often be more important than any skill in the art of wholesale massacre by land, air, or sea.

There is, therefore, no question of the old order being restored. Something must be done; and the most practical solution of the problems raised by President Wilson is the scheme of Lord Parker above referred to and fully set out in the appendix. Lord Parker laid great stress on the importance of a sound substructure. He emphasized the fact that all our system of municipal tribunals and police was a "creation of historical growth rooted in the far past, and that it was supported in reality not so much by organized force as by that sense of mutual obligation and respect for others which forms the foundation of those settled rules of conduct among individuals which alone make law and order possible."

Municipal law arose from customary rules which in general were voluntarily observed and only broken in

exceptional cases. "For such cases there was at first the remedy of self-help; but this left the weak at the mercy of the strong, and hence there arose a tendency for the weak to attach themselves to the strong, to become their retainers, surrendering a portion of their own independence for the sake of the protection the strong could afford, and increasing their lords' strength and resources. Thus it was important for the retainers to get 'good lordship,' and, ultimately when one lord became overlord or king, the peace maintained by each powerful lord merged into the king's peace, which survives in the formula by which wrongs are still charged as "contrary to the peace of our Lord the King."

There are in international relations precisely the same tendencies at work. "Such communal life as exists between nations is based, and must be based, upon customary rules of conduct. These customary rules are dignified by the name of international law, but there is no remedy for their breach otherwise than by war. During a war those nations not immediately concerned remain neutral. But war is an uncertain remedy; it inflicts as often as it redresses a wrong. Victory is generally on the side of the big battalions; hence you get international competition in armaments, though they may be used for aggression as well as for defence. Hence, too, arises the growing conviction among smaller nations that the weak nations cannot stand alone. They must get "good lordship"; they must attach themselves to the stronger, must surrender to them a portion of their independence for the sake of the protection which the stronger nation can afford them. This, however, only perpetuates war, and international law will be no check on a nation which definitely seeks overlordship, such as, according to German war philosophy Germany seeks; and the result, if she is successful, might be a peace, but it would be a *pax Germanica*."

Lord Parker, however, suggested that the real solution of the problem is to abolish neutrality and to band together the nations to resist an aggressor.

"The last three years have shewn us that war is a danger which may well be fatal to our common civilisation. Neutrality has become increasingly difficult. Those nations which at first desired to remain neutral have been one after the other dragged into the fray. The neutrality of others is secured only by fear. If we can once make it clear that in future there will be no neutrality the danger of war will be minimised, because its risk is increased. Lord Parker suggested that hitherto the efforts of those to whom war is hateful have been directed, on the one hand, to laying down rules for the conduct of belligerents in order to make war less dreadful and more humane, and, on the other hand, to laying down rules for the benefit and advantage of neutrals. But under the stress of war all those rules have vanished and the development of the future should be, not in consulting the selfish interests of neutrals, but in abolishing neutrality. Murders would increase if the murderer could count on the neutrality of bystanders, and it is the same with war. The neutral, in fact, shirks his share of the burden of humanity."

Charity begins at home. It is the admitted duty of the Allies to get up a League of Peace themselves and not to admit any other powers without solid proofs of good faith (e. g., in regard to annexed provinces or protectorates). Lord Parker's scheme was based on the presumption that all the members of any given society never want to commit the seven deadly sins at the same moment. The scheme omits all discussion of any international troops or police force or disarmament or the freedom of the seas. These are dangerous questions which cannot be settled offhand; but the scheme (if accepted) would certainly make war almost impracticable, and it also allows for the peculiar conditions of the different powers. It gives time for the settlement of disputes and scope for interference with preparations for war, which would have to be on a huge scale if (say) any two powers wanted to defy the league. This provision, would, for instance, secure the world against any abuse of sea power.

The scheme does not touch two other questions, namely, that of colonies and dependencies or that of interference by the league with the internal affairs of its members. Touching the first point, we may be reassured by remembering the peaceful partition of Africa among European nations in 1885; and it may be presumed that if disputes can be peacefully settled between nations there ought to be no obstacles to such settlements as between colonies and a mother-country. Touching the second point, the league is not likely to interfere with the internal affairs of any constituent member so long as the conflict is localized. It could scarcely intervene except to assert some political principle, as, for instance, the Holy Alliance might have done; and on any such point the members of the league would differ among themselves.

The important point at present is to act. Let the Allies limit their League of Nations on Lord Parker's lines; and we may be sure that apparent difficulties will be solved.¹ They are not really so formidable as the inherent difficulties of combining to make a world-war; and in the case of the Allies this war represents a combination to make a world-peace. The populations of the Central Empires will only appreciate the benefits of such a league when they see it before their eyes; and it will then be open to them to take such steps as to make their adherence practicable. The dangers of a top-heavy superstructure increase every day. A really sound substructure will survive all vicissitudes and the rest of the building can be set up under these conditions without any risk of hustling. A medieval cathedral used to be built up more than once, as it generally fell down at the first or second. We cannot afford to establish a League of Nations in this haphazard manner.

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¹ The scheme would not, for instance, radically alter the existing treaties between Great Britain and France and the United States; it would scarcely do more than extend them to the other allies.